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ROLE OF TRADE UNION IN STEPPING UP
 PRODUCTION IN STATE-OPERATED MINES IN CHINA

The following article entitled "What the Trade Union Should Do to Step Up Production in State-Operated Mines," by the Production Division of the Northeast Federation of Labor, was reprinted from the Tung-pei Jih-pao (Northeast China Daily) 3 February 1950.

To step up production it is necessary for the trade unions to carry out certain activities. They include the following:

A. Rally Workers and Staff Employees to Fulfill Quotas

A thorough mobilization of workers and staff employees for the task of fulfilling quotas is essential for production planning. When the new emulation drive has developed to the point of arousing extensive interest and enthusiasm, broad production goals should be announced. To make it easy for management to fulfill the quotas, the trade union should take the measures indicated below.

1. To pave the way for fulfilling production quotas, the trade union should clear up any misunderstanding on the part of the workers regarding the purpose of these quotas. It should point out to the workers that the production quota system is directly related to their own present and future interests. The trade union should raise the political understanding of the workers to a higher level and inspire them to break past production records. It should organize the progressive workers as a center of influence to inspire the less efficient workers to achieve higher skills. The union should consider it a foremost political objective to help management implement the production quota system.

- 1 -

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2. The union should organize the masses of workers to discuss the quotas. After the quotas are determined by management, their meaning should be explained in the trade union to the workers who should be encouraged to participate in the discussion of quotas and particularly to give freely their own evaluation of the production which management and the trade union should carefully study.

3. "... What we need to apply is not the quotas already achieved but those calling for greater achievement; this means that we must ascertain those midway between current quotas and those attained by Comrade Stakhanov." (Stalin) We must follow this principle in formulating production quotas; they should be neither too high nor too low.

4. The union should make recommendations to management for improving management whenever it sees the necessity. It is erroneous to implement production quotas merely for their own sake. Norms should vary with the nature of the raw materials, the capacity of the machinery, the organization of the labor force, the quantity, standards and types of products, etc. To set reasonable and meaningful norms, it is necessary to standardize raw materials, to ascertain the capacity of the machinery and the efficiency of labor, to completely standardize product specifications, and to systematize work procedures and rules.

5. Once the quotas are determined, as a rule they should not be subject to change for at least half a year. Frequent and sudden changes of quotas will render management ineffective and reduce the enthusiasm of the workers and employees.

B. Take Active Part in Setting and Surpassing Quotas

Participation in formulating the quotas and in surpassing them is an essential function of the trade union. Failure to recognize the importance of their own role in planning has led some trade unions to forfeit their right of participation. Furthermore, some union organizations have drawn up production plans with quite inadequate quotas. Instead of drawing up plans calling for a production increase, they have set the norms at a lower level in the hope that they might fulfill them more easily. On the other hand, some organizations have made the quotas too high and relentlessly driven the workers to work overtime regardless of the resulting rapid deterioration of the machinery. Some union organizations were remiss in not making timely recommendations to management to correct these deviations.

A production plan represents a common objective for all workers and staff employees. An inadequate plan or the poor administration of a plan will impair the morale of the workers. Therefore, it is of great importance that trade unions should participate in the making of production plans. As practice provides them with more experience in making production plans they should guide the workers in drawing up detailed plans for each workshop and for each worker, for the month, for each 10-day period, or for the daily schedule. By virtue of directing production planning the union takes its proper place in factory management.

C. Collective Agreement a Means to Raise Production

To sign a collective agreement is indispensable for the trade union to step up production. It is also a means for the union to organize its workers for fulfilling the quotas. Furthermore, the collective agreement serves as a frame of reference to regulate the relationship between the union and the management. It clarifies the responsibilities of both. It strengthens the authority of the management and of the union and overcomes such deviations as overemphasis on trivial matters, bureaucratic attitudes, and inefficient leadership.

- 2 -

RESTRICTED

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An adequate production plan and a reasonable wage system are the necessary conditions for introducing a collective agreement. A collective agreement must clearly define the rights and duties of the management and of the union. It is the union's duty to guide the workers and staff employees in fulfilling or surpassing the production plans of the state. The union has the right to demand from management all necessary materials, such as raw materials, machinery, equipment and tools, and to require the setting up of an incentive system, welfare and cultural facilities, etc.

On the other hand, management has the right to request the worker to fulfill the production plans, while it has the obligation to fulfill the requirements of the collective agreement as to incentive systems, welfare and cultural facilities, etc. Both sides must honor the agreement, for otherwise it becomes a one-sided document and ineffective for increasing production and for assuring the interests of both state and individual.

A collective agreement is a document signed by representatives of the workers and of management. Such agreement covers all aspects of questions concerning the material payments, the cultural and welfare services, the sanitary requirements, and the punishment and reward of the workers and staff employees. The terms and exact content of the agreement must be discussed again and again by all workers with full deliberation. While a collective agreement is in the discussion stage, the union should develop the political ideology of the workers and encourage them to exert every effort to fulfill the production plans. Only in this way can the collective agreement fully represent the will of the workers and win their solid support.

Collective agreements are essential. In fact, workers who made outstanding records in the emulation drives were the most eager for collective agreements. Recently, these workers have insisted on closer ties with management. It is not enough to have coordination among the workers according to their skills. The success of this campaign depends largely on the ready supply of raw materials, machinery, equipment, and tools, but it also depends on the functions of the collective agreement.

To accumulate experience, we may introduce collective agreements to a limited number of mines or plants. Whenever possible, we may initiate collective agreements covering a whole industry. Undoubtedly this would greatly facilitate the introduction of collective agreements to individual enterprises. After a collective agreement is signed, the trade-union officials and responsible workers should inspect the workshops and engine rooms and check the work progress of individual workers. A weekly discussion group should meet to consider the progress in production planning. Trade unions should recommend to the management the keeping of daily and weekly production records, giving copies of these records to the union. The management should also hold meetings to inform the workers of the progress of the production plans and to report to the workers on the collective agreement.

In short, the trade union should put the promotion and administration of the collective agreement in its daily work schedule.

D. Coordination Schedule and Employee Suggestions

The setting up of schedules for coordination and the use of employees' suggestions are indispensable conditions in the new emulation campaigns and are essential to the fulfillment of collective agreements. Generally speaking, trade unions should promote the extensive application of coordination schedules. However, this type of schedule must be based on cooperation on the part of workers and a clear picture of the lines of organization. It should be accompanied by definite plans. Coordination schedules between plants should be negotiated by delegates from the plants involved assisted by union officials and representatives of management.

- 3 -

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

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The coordination schedule should be so designed as to offer effective solutions to various problems. A coordinate schedule differs from a general agreement in that it is a specific and concrete document with the definite purpose to facilitate production plans and to enforce labor discipline.

A coordination schedule is effective under certain circumstances but it has its limitations. Its coverage is not as complete as a collective agreement whose purpose is to adjust public and private interests in the process of production. After the introduction of a production plan, of product standardization, of a technical procedure of a system of production quotas, of a system of crediting work achievement, of an inspection system, and after a set of rules governing workers' discipline has been implemented, the coordination schedule will no longer be necessary.

When the above systems are established, the duty of the union will be to supervise the production plans and the collective agreement, including the monthly, weekly, and daily production schedules of the workshops, the work procedure, and the individual workers.

As a result of the improvement in the workers' political awareness, the administrative departments of various industrial plants here received many employees' suggestions concerning factory management and technical matters. However, due to a lack of adequate organization and leadership, many of the proposals have been ignored or delayed, and many new methods and valuable recommendations embodied in the proposals were not adopted. As shown in the new emulation drive, any improvement that originated as a suggestion from workers is the more likely to take root and grow. Therefore, the trade union should regard the promotion of employees' suggestions as an indispensable method for production increase. Furthermore, the union should use the promotion of employees' suggestions as a means to bring together the engineers, administrative personnel, and skilled workers thereby enabling all of them to understand the general plan as well as their own practice. However, the value of employees' suggestions as a regular feature has not been understood by the administrative personnel and thus the movement has not received encouragement and support. This is one of the difficulties in the way of the new emulation campaign.

E. Group Meetings and Study Classes on Production Techniques

We believe that to hold production meetings among workers in the same work shift, workshop, plant, or the same industry is of great importance. This production meeting differs from the meeting of the workers' representatives mainly in that it is organized to study collectively production techniques, to observe the suitable experience of the more skilful workers, and to learn modern methods of scientific management. Moreover, the meeting of workers' representatives has its function to hear and discuss reports from the factory control committee and to criticize or make recommendations to the factory control committee. Many administrative departments and trade-union organizations still fail to distinguish the different functions of these two types of meetings.

Certain preparations must be made before a production meeting is held. These include the gathering of information on the new work experience of certain workers, the choice of the model workers, etc. We should invite engineers, experts, technicians, and administrative personnel to the meeting and ask them to sum up the reports on progress and submit the reports to scientific analysis. The meeting should draw up resolutions on the reports after they have been discussed and given final form.

- 4 -

RESTRICTED

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The engineers, technicians, and administrative personnel should be urged to go to the workshops and introduce principles and techniques to the workers. The administrative department should establish study classes or schools to train workers so that advanced workers can become acquainted with modern science. The union should encourage the negotiations of contracts between master workers and apprentices so that the technical level and the inherent powers of the working class as a whole will continue to grow.

A production conference should become a regular institution for the union in order to organize group study of techniques and to exchange work experience. The union should make a special effort to give wide circulation to the experience of the advanced workers. Material or moral rewards should be given to these technically advanced workers. We should urge all other workers to learn from them. In short, we should mobilize the workers by the thousands to the task of developing our economy at the greatest speed.

The production division of the trade union should take the initiative to expand its area of influence and draw up plans in accordance with qualifications for carrying out the various tasks mentioned here.

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- 5 -

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